A CHRISTMAS PARTY FOR SANTA CLAUS

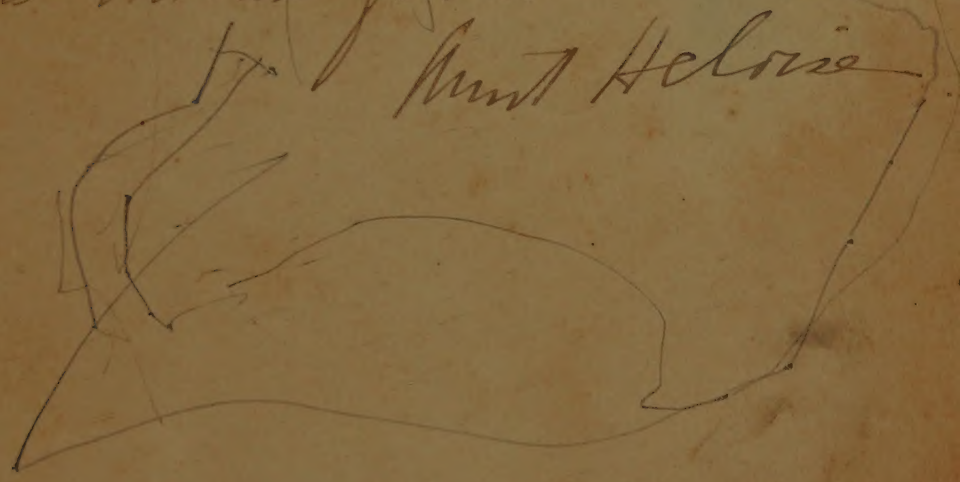
IDA M. HUNTINGTON

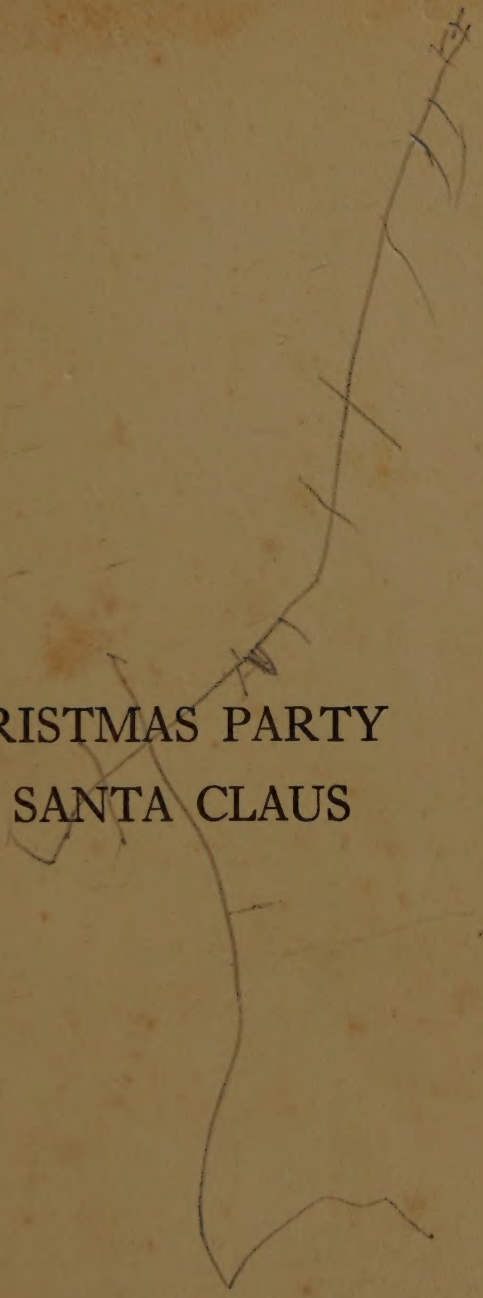
JN'B

$ 18.00

To Virginia -
with heaps of love & best
wishes from
Aunt Heloise

1918





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by

IDA M HUNTINGTON

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Planning the Party

"SANTA CLAUS is such a dear old fellow." Dremia breathed a long sigh of satisfaction as she closed her Christmas book and dropped it on the low chair beside the couch where she was lying. She had been reading by the last rays of sunset light streaming through the window at the head of the couch. Now she nestled down among the cushions and lay watching the shadow elves as they chased the sunbeam fairies away,

and played bugaboo behind every post and tree. But Dremia did not play with them as usual. She was too busy thinking of Santa Claus.

"He is always doing something for some one," she mused. "I wonder why no one has ever thought to do anything for him! Wouldn't it be fun to have a party for him!—a real Christmas party—and invite all the folks from Dreamland, Fairyland, and Make-believe Land; Santa Claus Land, too, of course. We could have a Christmas tree, and everybody could bring a present, and we could have a supper afterward. I'll do it!" And she bounced up and down on the springs of the old couch in her excitement.

"I'll ask Fairy Godmother to come and help me plan it. She loves to do such things. She and Santa Claus are just like each other, only different! I know she'll come if I can only get the charm right."

Dremia turned over, buried her face in the pillow, and began repeating:

"One, two, three! Earth, air, and sea,
Fairy Godmother bring to me!
Tiny steeds and coach resplendent,
At her slightest wish attendant,
While, unseeing, I implore,
Bring, oh, bring her to my door!"

Dremia's voice died away in a long-drawn murmur. She lay perfectly still, holding her breath for fear she might break the charm.

Hark! Wasn't that the stamping of tiny hoofs before her door? Wasn't that

the rustle of a silken gown by her side? Dremia raised her head quickly. Sure enough, there on the low chair by the couch, her fairy wand lying on the Christmas book, sat Fairy Godmother herself. She turned with a smile on her face as Dremia raised her head.

"One, two, three! Earth, air, and sea
Fairy Godmother brought to thee.
Tiny steeds and coach resplendent,
At my slightest wish attendant,
Wait before thy close-shut door.
Prithee, say, what wilt thou more?

"What now, child? What is thy wish? A diamond necklace, or gold furniture, or a coach and four?" asked she.

"No, no! Nothing for myself this time, dear Fairy Godmother," cried Dremia, jumping up hastily to greet her. "But

it is Christmas night, and Santa Claus has brought me ever so many pretty gifts this year. He has made me so happy that, as I lay here, I was wishing I could do something for him. Then a delightful thought came to me, and I wanted you to help me plan a surprise for him. Don't you b'lieve he would like a Christmas party, dear Fairy Godmother?"

"A Christmas party! A party for Santa Claus! Why, Dremia, who ever heard of such a thing!"

"I don't 'spect any one ever did, Fairy Godmother. And that is why I thought it would be fun. Couldn't we have a Christmas tree, and everybody come and bring presents?"

"A Christmas tree for Santa Claus!" said Fairy Godmother rather breathlessly, her eyes twinkling with fun as the thought grew more familiar. "Dremia, we'll do it, as sure as you live! We'll do it this very night! Santa Claus is at home now, fast asleep. He is so tired from his Christmas Eve trip around the world that we can get everything ready before he wakes."

"But how can you invite all the people so quickly?" objected Dremia. "And where will you have the party? And how can you get everything ready if all the little people of Santa Claus Land are tired out and asleep too?"

"Oh, no trouble at all!" loftily answered Fairy Godmother. "We will

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Puck and Ariel floated in through the window

have it at Santa Claus Hall, Santa Claus's own home, which is built in the center of Santa Claus Land. We will send the Old Woman Who Sweeps the Cobwebs Out of the Sky to clean up the house for us. Mother Hubbard will go with her and get her cupboard ready to hold the goodies until it is time to set the table for the party. The Poor Dog will not want any bone because he will have so much supper afterwards. Jack of the Beanstalk can take his hatchet and cut down the biggest tree in Santa Claus Land for a Christmas tree. If his hatchet is sharp enough to hitch him up the beanstalk, I think it will do for that, too.

"Come, Dremia! Put on your cloak

and hood, and I will take you in the pumpkin coach to my house. I can plan so much faster there."

"Why, how can I ride in the little pumpkin coach, Fairy Godmother?" cried Dremia, as she obediently slipped on her coat and tied her hood tightly under her chin. "I'm too big."

"Any one I wish can ride in my coach," answered Fairy Godmother. "Didn't Cinderella, and Peter Pumpkin, and other dear friends of yours? Besides, you are not so big as you think," touching the little girl with her wand as she spoke. "Look in the glass, Dremia!"

Dremia looked up, and in the glass before her saw two little figures reflected.

One was Fairy Godmother, surely, in her peaked cap, flowing silken skirts, and high-heeled slippers with bows and silver buckles. But who was the other, that wee maiden in a red cloak and hood, gazing at her with startled eyes? Why-ee, was it her own self?

"Oh, goody, goody! Guess I can ride in the pumpkin coach now. But shan't I be too heavy for the mouse-gray steeds, Fairy Godmother?" she asked, as she hurried along by the Fairy Godmother's side to the place where the golden coach stood waiting.

"No, they are steeds from Fairyland, strong and nimble," Fairy Godmother answered, helping her in, and nodding

brightly to the coachman as she spoke.

The footman slammed the door of the coach, the coachman gathered up the shining reins, snapped his whip over the heads of the mouse-gray steeds, and away they went.

In just two jiffies, two wags of a lamb's tail, and the twinkling of an eye, the coach drew up before the quaintest of cottages, such as only a Fairy Godmother would think of having. There it stood, under the Wishing Tree, right in the center of Everywhere, with the Children's World all around it—Fairyland, Santa Claus Land, Toyland, Dreamland, and Make-believe Land—and Mortal Land dimly seen beyond.

"I suppose it looks rather queer to you," said Fairy Godmother. "But you see, the Old Woman Who Sweeps has a room in the attic, and it is much more convenient for her to come in through that big skylight; so I must have that. Then Mother Hubbard and the Poor Dog also live with me since Father Hubbard died, and her cupboard takes up so much room that the kitchen is the biggest part of the house. The Queen That Eats Bread and Honey likes to come here, too, and of course the kitchen must be nice for her. Come in, Dremia!" opening the door and leading the little girl in.

Dremia gasped with astonishment as she looked about her. There was a big

fireplace with a chimney large enough for the gnomes and brownies to come down whenever they were in too much of a hurry to enter at the door. For that matter, fairy folk do not need doors, anyway. They just have to think where they want to be, and presto! there they are.

In the big fireplace was a splendid fire of sweet-smelling woods crackling and blazing brightly. Two grotesque little fire elves with long pokers in their hands kept careful watch over the fire. Around the room there were odd-shaped toadstool chairs and tables. Couches as soft and cozy as humming birds' nests were piled with rose-leaf and poppy-petal pillows. Glow-worm lamps hung twinkling from

the ceiling. Spider-web portières and curtains were draped at doorways and windows. Thick gray and green moss rugs were spread upon the floors, and all the other dainty furnishings that fairies love were to be seen.

"Come, now we must get to work!" cried Fairy Godmother, bustling about. "Mother Hubbard! Oh, Mother Hubbard!" And as that lady hastily appeared at the door, Fairy Godmother continued:

"Put a glow-worm lamp up on the skylight to let the Old Woman Who Sweeps know we want her. Then summon Giant Fee-Fi-Fo-Fum and have him carry your cupboard over to Santa Claus's house. Tell him he shall have a roast

sirloin of beef with a sprig of holly on it for his supper, which will be much better for his digestion than the blood of an Englishman. Then have the Old Woman Who Sweeps go over to Santa Claus's with you and straighten up the rooms and make everything ready for us.

"Let me see! Oh, yes; after the Giant brings your cupboard, send Jack of the Beanstalk and the Giant to find the very biggest tree in Santa Claus Land, and have them put it up in the farther end of Santa Claus's main hall. Call the gnomes and the kobolds, and tell them to stir up a roaring fire and to decorate the hall with forest greens. They can stay around in the corners and see the frolic. Yes, take the

Poor Dog along! He will want a share in the fun too. Only be careful he does not get into a fuss with Puss in Boots."

"I was just about to buy him a coffin, ma'am," said Mother Hubbard. "But perhaps he would rather go to the party."

"Very well, hurry along!" commanded Fairy Godmother. "And if you need any help wake some of the little people of Santa Claus Land. They have had sleep enough by this time. Only do not wake Santa Claus yet, whatever you do!"

Mother Hubbard bobbed her head in reply, and disappeared, slamming the door after her in her excitement.

"Now for the invitations!" said Fairy Godmother.

"How can you send them, Godmother?" asked Dremia. "Who can go all over Fairyland and Dreamland and Make-believe Land, and Santa Claus Land, and get all the folks to Santa Claus Hall in time for the party?"

"Why, Puck and Ariel, to be sure," answered Fairy Godmother, briskly. "Puck, you know, can put a girdle round the world in forty minutes, and you can travel in no time all over Fairyland and Dreamland, while in Make-believe Land, Imagination takes you anywhere in a flash."

Stepping to a window that looked toward Fairyland, she opened it, and leaning far out, rang a sweet-toned silver bell.

To Dremia the peals seemed to say:

"Come, come, come!
Sprite and fairy, come!
Haste to do my bidding!
Haste, for I am waiting!
Puck and Ariel, come!
Come, come, come!"

Scarcely had the echoes died away when Puck and Ariel floated lightly in through the window. Puck was dressed in a brilliant suit of orange and yellow that made him look like a gorgeous butterfly, while Ariel was clad in a suit of palest green as delicate as that of a katydid.

They came directly to Fairy Godmother, who had seated herself on her tallest toadstool chair, and, doffing each his tiny cap, bowed before her with a flourish, repeating together:

"Swiftly, without halt or rest,
We have come at thy behest.
Tell us, what is thy command?
We will go o'er sea or land.
Only let us know thy will,
And thy bidding we'll fulfill."

"My faithful little messengers! I knew I could depend on you," said Fairy Godmother, approvingly. "But you will need to make haste. Now, listen closely while I give you my message. To-night Dremia wishes to have a party for Santa Claus, and desires all his friends and associates in Fairyland, Dreamland, Toyland, Make-believe Land, and Santa Claus Land invited. Go, then, and bid them all come! Tell each one to bring a gift to hang on the tree and some goodies for the supper that will follow.

"Puck, go thou to Fairyland and Toyland. Ariel, turn thou to Dreamland, where the swift nightmare will carry thee fast and far. Then on to Make-believe Land, where the flighty steed Imagination will await thee. Only be careful that Imagination run not away with thee. Now away, away!"

"Godmother, dear, may I not go with them?" pleaded Dremia. "I have always wanted to go to Fairyland, and Toyland, and Make-believe Land."

"I hardly see how it can be managed," doubtfully replied Fairy Godmother. "They are going different ways."

"Couldn't I go with Puck first, and then with Ariel?" begged Dremia. "I don't

want to go to Dreamland, for I can go there any night by myself. And besides, I should be afraid, if he intends to ride that dreadful nightmare. She goes so fast and furiously, and takes you over such frightful precipices, and through fire and water. You will take me with you, will you not, dear Puck?" asked Dremia, turning to him.

"Surely we can manage it, little lady," answered Puck. "Thou canst go with me to Fairyland and Toyland while Ariel goeth to Dreamland. Then we can meet him, and thou canst accompany him to Make-believe Land while I wake the little people of Santa Claus Land. Will that do?"

"That will be just the nicest way," joyfully replied Dremia.

"Off with you, then!" said Fairy Godmother. "For I still have much to do. Tell them all to be at Santa Claus Hall by one of the clock!"

Delivering the Invitations

AS Puck took Dremia's hand gently in his, she felt herself rise from the floor, and the red cloak seemed to buoy her up and bear her onward. At first all was dark about them, but gradually the way grew lighter until they found themselves in the heart of Fairyland, where it is always bright. For there the pleasant sunlight in which the fairies love to work among the flowers and trees, and to help their friends the birds and bees, grows dim only to make

way for the still more pleasant moonlight in which the fairies frolic and revel to their hearts' content.

Puck and Dremia passed through cool and mysterious forests where wonderful birds with brilliant plumage were gayly caroling. Dremia saw the timid forest fairies peeping shyly at them from behind the mossy trunks of the trees. Through lovely gardens they went, where flowers more splendid than Dremia had ever imagined nodded and bloomed, and where bees and butterflies feasted and floated, tasting, and sipping, and carrying away the delicious fairy honey which the flowers always had ready for them.

On they went through shadowy valleys,

where the tinkle of waterfalls and the murmur of running brooks could be faintly heard. On, on, and as yet no message had been delivered. Dremia wondered why.

"We must deliver our message first to the king and queen of Fairyland," said Puck, answering Dremia's unspoken question.

At last they came to a place where the moonlight was a little softer, the trees a little richer green, the flowers brighter and more fragrant, the music of the birds and the murmur of the brooks sweeter than anywhere else. In the midst of all this beauty Oberon and Titania loved to hold their court. Dremia rubbed her eyes to make sure she saw clearly. On a throne of

ivory and mother-of-pearl, in their robes of state, sat the king and queen. Oberon, clad in royal purple robes with facings of gold, and a gold crown on his head, was a king beyond compare. Titania, dressed in gleaming white, with strings of fairy pearls around her throat and waist, was a vision of loveliness. The diamond coronet resting on her dusky hair sparkled like dewdrops in the moonbeams.

Around the throne were gathered the lords and ladies of the fairy court, the gentlemen in rich attire of orange, purple, red, and dark green, the ladies in gowns of palest pink, lavender, yellow, and blue, all together forming a rainbow.

A tiny page with a honeysuckle

trumpet heralded the arrival of Puck and Dremia.

"Approach!" graciously commanded the king. "From whom dost thou come, and what is thy business with us this evening?"

"We are messengers from the Fairy Godmother, O King!" answered Puck. "She and little Lady Dremia are giving a party for Santa Claus to-night, and request the honor of thy presence with that of thy courtiers. In the far-famed Santa Claus Hall, at one of the clock, will the friends and associates of Santa Claus gather to greet him and spend some happy hours."

"Gladly and promptly will we be there, O messenger," answered the king. "The

wish of the Fairy Godmother is as a command to all the fairies, and we would also honor the good Santa Claus and little Lady Dremia with our presence. Rich gifts will we bring to him who is always giving to others, even as do the fairies. But stay thou and sup with us."

"Nay, O King! A good messenger delays not, thou knowest. Speed us on our way, I pray thee, for we have yet other lands to visit. The message must be carried far and wide."

"Go, then!" commanded Oberon. "But some day when the case is not so urgent, bring again the little Lady Dremia to our court, and we will show her caskets of rare jewels, and all the riches and

wonders of Fairyland. Will we not, my merry men and maidens?"

"Yes, your Majesty," came a chorus of soft voices. "A friend of Fairy Godmother's is always most welcome at our revels."

"Draw near before thou goest, little Lady Dremia," said Titania, who had hitherto been silent. "Art thou a good child? a lover of the fairies as well as of Santa Claus?"

"Oh, your Majesty, I love them dearly," stammered Dremia, her heart fluttering with excitement.

"Then will I touch thee with my scepter, that thou may'st ever be able to see us as we play in the forests or among the

flowers, and never grow too old to care for us. Forget not through thy whole life this visit to the fairyland of childhood."

Dremia curtsied low to the gracious queen. Puck again took her hand, and, preceded by the tiny page, they left the royal presence and were soon on their way.

By and by the country through which they were passing changed very much in appearance. Instead of being beautiful, everything was queer, or curious, or strange. Dremia could not understand why things looked so different.

"We are coming to Broken Toyland, where all the good broken toys go after they leave Mortal Land," explained Puck. "They have had very hard lives, most of

them, and gone through terrible experiences. Glad indeed are they to rest forever in this part of No-Man's Land. But they are very sensitive, so if thou dost notice anything peculiar in their appearance, do not speak of it, I pray thee."

"I'll be very, very careful," promised Dremia, earnestly. "I know I don't like to have people notice my pug nose and freckles. I always did wonder what becomes of all the old toys the children love so much."

By this time they were passing through groves of stiff little pine trees standing in straight rows. Dremia noticed that many of the branches were broken and the trunks scarred and notched as if by

knives. Just beyond the grove was a placid lake where floated wrecks of stately ships and boats of various kinds. Had the lake not been very still and smooth, they would probably have sunk, for big holes showed in their hulls, many of their masts were gone, most of the paint was knocked off them. and their timbers gaped apart.

Hardly had they passed the lake when Dremia was surprised to see in a green meadow many different kinds of animals lying down or moving slowly about. Horses, cows, pigs, goats, donkeys, and sheep were hobnobbing together, while dozens of chickens, geese, and turkeys were half hopping, half fluttering about. Oh,

they did look so queer! What was the matter? Dremia would have liked to call Puck's attention to them, but remembered what he had said and kept still. The fairy seemed to read her thoughts.

"I know," said he. "It is very strange and sad. Look! Some of the horses have only three legs, and some have lost their tails. The cows that ought to have crumpled horns have none at all. The sheep look as if moths had got into their wool. The chickens have lost their cackles and the ducks their quacks, while the turkey tails have all gone to make feather dusters, and the geese feathers to make doll mattresses.

"Poor things! Poor things! Had it not

been for the thought that Broken Toyland awaited them, they never could have stood the shock that came when the children so misused them.

"See, we are coming now to the menagerie. There are Teddy bears that have been squeezed to within an inch of their lives. Giraffes have had their necks stretched until they cracked. The wind-up tigers have broken their springs. The monkeys have swung till they can swing no more. White dromedaries that have been dragged in the mud and dirt until they do not know themselves are trying to hide in dark corners. The elephants have gone mad, and thrown off their howdahs, and chased their attendants away. What

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Puck showing Broken Toyland to Dremia

could the children have been thinking of, to treat their pets so badly!

"A little beyond is the military hospital," and Puck pointed to a tumble-down building ahead of them. "Valiant tin soldiers by the dozens are lying on the white beds, battered and forlorn, with doll nurses caring for them most tenderly. Outside the hospital guns and balls of every size are piled in big heaps. Near by is the doll hospital, where fussy, important doll doctors are giving first aid to injured dolls of all sizes and ages.

"These are the Jacks-in-the-, vainly trying to find their boxes," he continued, as some hobgoblin-looking creatures scurried past them. "These queer-shaped

objects running around in that distracted way are the dissected-picture people hunting everywhere for their lost pieces.

"That long, low building is a carriage house, where wagon wheels, velocipede wheels, and piano legs chase one another about, trying to find where they belong.

"Over here in the concert hall, punctured drums, trumpets without the blow, horns without a key, violins minus strings, all together are making a horrible discord.

"See all those round things up in the air?" Dremia threw back her head and stared intently up at the tiny bobbing dots that could be seen in the sky. "Well, those are the balloons that got away. The

toy villages across the way are filled with dishes that have dropped, and furniture that has had its arms and legs dislocated.

"But you will find all the inhabitants of Broken Toyland as happy as kings in spite of their misfortunes, for they know that nothing unpleasant will ever happen to them again."

Puck stopped in the middle of a flat, grassy plain, and picking up a penny whistle that lay on a stone near by, just as it had been dropped and forgotten by some child in Mortal Land, he blew a shrill whistle.

Then pandemonium reigned. Everybody and everything tried to get to him first. The invalid soldiers, forgetting

their aches and pains, hobbled out with the pretty doll nurses. Fair lady doll patients ran out with the fussy doctors. Horses came galloping up on three legs. Wagons, velocipedes, wheelbarrows, and balls, in every style, rolled up. Teddy bears and baa-lambs came together. The Jacks-in-the- fairly stood on their heads with excitement. Dishes and spoons paired off, and the dissected-puzzle people mixed themselves up so they never could be straightened out.

Dremia watched them all in amazement. Never before had she seen such a sight.

At another shrill note of the whistle everybody stopped as still as if playing

"One, two, three, squat where you be." Raising his voice so he could be heard by all, Puck gave his message:

"Friends of Toyland, ever-living reminders of the happiness Santa Claus has given to the children of Mortal Land, hear ye the command of Fairy Godmother! This very night all the people of all the lands that make up the Children's World join in a great Christmas party in honor of Santa Claus, given by little Lady Dremia and Fairy Godmother at the far-famed Santa Claus Hall. Can she depend on your being there?"

"A party for Santa Claus! Would he care to see us again?" they cried.

"Yes, all the more because you are

reminders of happy Christmases gone by, when he was the giver of happiness," answered Puck.

"Then will we be there, one and all, though we have to come hoppity-jump!" they answered in chorus.

"I'll tell you what," cried a Jack-in-the-, suddenly popping up from his box as a broken spring unexpectedly gave way, "we'll get the biggest stocking that ever was filled at Christmas time, and hang it up on Santa Claus' chimney piece. Then some of us will climb in, fill it to the brim, and have a tableau that will make him hold his sides with laughter."

"Oh, you dear things!" cried Dremia, clapping her hands in delight. "I can

hardly wait until the time comes to see you. I will make faces at you until you all laugh and tumble out of the stocking; see if I don't!"

At once they began to plan who should get into the stocking. "Let me!" "Let me!" "Let me!" was heard on all sides. Dremia and Puck put their hands over their ears and fled, laughing, from the hubbub.

"Children's toys always make such a clatter," said Puck. "Only the fairies have the nice, noiseless playthings."

"What do the fairies play with?" asked Dremia, wonderingly.

"Oh, pretty seed balls, spider-web hammocks and swings, grasshopper steeds,

and bee lances. We pop the chestnut burs and hide in the deserted milkweed pods. We play 'Drop the rose petal' and 'Fairy wants a flower stalk.' We join the moonbeams in a game of peek-a-boo with the quivering birch leaves. There is nothing coarse, or cruel, or stupid in our play," answered Puck.

"Listen!" turning his head as the sound of faint, far-off music was borne on the breeze. "I hear Ariel coming. He will take thee now to Make-believe Land, while I go on and wake the little people of Santa Claus Land. I will have some fun with them, methinks. I will tickle their toes, and pull their noses, and twitch the covers off them. Time they were up long ago, the

little rascals! Why, they have been sleeping for hours! Hither, Ariel!"

Ariel drew rapidly near, singing in a sweet voice:

"Dainty Lady Dremia,
Wilt thou go with me
Over hill and mountain,
Over lake and sea?
Into every country,
Into every clime
Known to varied peoples,
Known throughout all time?
Swift Imagination
Waits to bear us on;
Dainty Lady Dremia,
Haste, and we'll be gone!"

Loosing her hold of Puck's hand, Dremia turned eagerly toward Ariel. She felt herself lifted and borne upward, but could not see the shape of the wonderful steed carrying her forward so rapidly.

"Where are we really going, Ariel?" asked she.

"To the homes of all thy old-time friends, dear Dremia," answered Ariel. "Thou wilt soon see. Look!" and he pointed to a small hut deep in a green forest. "Who is that going in at the door?"

"Little Red Riding Hood, with her basket on her arm, going to see her grandmother!" exclaimed Dremia, delightedly, waving to her as they passed.

"And who is that over there?"

"Oh, Golden Hair and the Three Bears! The bears do not look very angry, even if she did break their chairs and eat their porridge. Do you suppose they will come?"

Ariel and Dremia flying over Make-believe Land

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"Surely they will!" answered Ariel, softly chanting his message as they flew swiftly onward:

"Fairy Godmother's greetings! Come one, come all,
To a Christmas party at Santa Claus Hall,
With a gift in thy hand for the good Saint Nick.
No time for delay! Be quick! Be quick!"

"See! there under the trees are Beauty and the Beast," said Dremia. "How he does love her, and how good she is to him! And I am sure that is Hansel leading Gretel along that narrow path. Are we near the cottage of the old witch? I am so glad she did not eat them up that time she had them. Isn't that Undine down by the waterfall? Do you think she will play any tricks on Santa Claus if she comes to-night? And the Water-babies in the

stream a little farther on! Do you suppose they will come with her?

"They hear you, Ariel! They hear you! And there is Jack the Giant-Killer's little house! I wonder where he keeps his famous hatchet. Oh, my! That is the Giant's castle up on that cliff, isn't it? I hope he won't come unless he has a big supper first. I'm afraid of him!

"Now I can see Sleeping Beauty's castle and the tower where she lay sleeping when the Right Prince kissed her. And there is the palace of the king who had the four-and-twenty-blackbird pie! Do you suppose he would show it to us if we stopped? Next to it is Aladdin's wonderful palace, with the light of the

magic lamp shining through the windows. Make every one of them hear, Ariel! I know they will all come!"

Swiftly forward they went. The open door of a cave in a rocky ledge attracted Dremia's attention.

"Is it the cave of the Forty Thieves, where all the jewels and gold and silver dishes are shut up, Ariel? If we should say 'Open, sesame!' could we get in, do you suppose? Wish we had time to try!

"Oh, look at that beautiful garden over there, with the silver bells and cockle shells! I know that belongs to Mistress Mary. Will she be too contrary to come, do you think, Ariel?"

Soon they were passing over a quaint,

old-fashioned village. A boy with a squealing pig over his shoulder was running down the street.

"Tom, Tom, the Piper's Son, as I live!" laughed Dremia. "And there is Simple Simon fishing in that pail. The Jack Sprats, Boy Blue, Little Miss Muffet, Jack Horner, and lots of my other friends live in this village, Ariel. Be sure to make them hear."

"They will all hear, Lady Dremia. Thou needst not fear," answered Ariel.

By and by Dremia noticed the blue waters of the sea beneath her. Glancing down, she saw a queer craft putting out from the shore.

"Oh, the Three Wise Men of Gotham

are putting to sea in their bowl!" she cried. "Call them quickly, Ariel, before they are upset. And see this pretty island we are coming to! It's Robinson Crusoe's island, I know. Do you s'pose he and his man Friday will come, Ariel?"

The Little Lame Prince went sailing by on his magic carpet. Dremia called to him as he passed, and he smiled and nodded back to her.

On they went, Ariel delivering his message here, there, and everywhere, in the very strangest places you can think of. He paused once at a house made from an old shoe, with forty-'leven children tumbling out of every crack and crevice. He stopped at a stable where a beautiful

black horse lived, and at a dog kennel with a message for a faithful dog.

A small rabbit in a rabbit hutch cocked up one ear to listen. A frog sitting on a rock in a stream went ker-splash into the water, he was so pleased when he heard the invitation.

Ariel knocked loudly at a half-hidden door in a mountain side, and told the Pied Piper he must be sure to bring his children, for a Christmas party without children, even if Santa Claus were there, would not be a Christmas party at all.

On, on—until the message had been delivered to every one that Dremia could possibly think of. "I am sure that is all, dear Ariel!" she sighed blissfully.

"Then must we be returning, Lady Dremia!" answered Ariel. "It will never do for the guests to arrive first at Santa Claus Hall. Listen!"

From all over the Children's World came the sound of happy laughter, and of merry bustle and confusion. One and all were primping and preparing for the trip to Santa Claus Hall. Indeed, some had already started, each with an appropriate gift in his hand to hang on the Christmas tree or place on the Christmas table.

Dremia and Ariel were borne on lightly before them. "We shall arrive first; do not fear, Lady Dremia!" said Ariel. "Naught can exceed in swiftness the flight of Imagination."

Chapter Three
The Party at Santa Claus Hall

"WHIR-R-R-R-R-R-R," sounded the warning note.

Hickory Dickory Dock, who had run away up to the top of the tall grandfather's clock which stood on the stairway in Santa Claus Hall, sat up suddenly, his heart fluttering, his beady black eyes gleaming, his whiskers twitching with excitement.

Mother Hubbard and the Old Woman Who Sweeps were taking their last look

around the rooms to be sure everything was in readiness. The floor of the great hall was as clean as broom could make it. Down at the farther end, behind an immense screen, stood a stately Christmas tree, all ready for the lights and the gifts. A huge fire had been laid in the fireplace, and the fire elves had promised to touch it off at the proper moment so that the flames would illumine the whole hall.

Holly wreaths and bunches of mistletoe hung about, while Christmas garlands of all kinds were festooned from the rafters and windows.

Santa Claus, in the next room, had just awakened with a yawn, and now could be heard moving about, getting ready to

come to his cozy seat by the fire, all unconscious of what awaited him.

Low giggles and a faint rustling behind another tall screen at one side of the fireplace betrayed the presence of the people from Toyland, making ready for their tableau. They had borrowed the stocking of Giant Fee-Fi-Fo-Fum, and were having a great time filling it. It was pretty well worn and had holes in toe and heel, but that suited them all the better, for they could peep out and see more of the fun.

The patter of feet outside was evidence that Puck had thoroughly waked the little people of Santa Claus Land with his pranks, and that they were ready for their part of the program.

"O-N-E," solemnly struck the old clock on the stair.

Hickory Dickory Dock, half frightened to death, ran down the clock and scurried to his hole in the wall, leaving not so much as a whisker to be seen. Mother Hubbard and the Old Woman Who Sweeps had mysteriously vanished.

Santa Claus pulled on his high boots with a stamp, and laying his hand on the door knob, opened the door with a jerk. As he did so, the fire elves, who had touched off their fire, blew with all their might and main, so that the dancing flames made the hall bright.

The bustle behind the fireplace screen ceased. Santa Claus took one step into

the hall, rubbing his eyes as he came. Suddenly a wild shriek of glee from Old Boreas, as he blew around the corner of the house, caused Santa Claus to look up. The great outside door of the hall was flung open with a bang, the fire blazed up still brighter, the screen blew over, and in at the door poured a crowd of strangely familiar people, all laughing, talking, and calling at once.

"Merry Christmas, Santa Claus!"

"Hurrah for good Saint Nick!"

"A Christmas party for Santa Claus!"

"A Christmas tree for Santa Claus!"

"A Christmas stocking for Santa Claus!"

"Hurrah! Hurrah!"

First and foremost came Fairy Godmother and Dremia. Advancing gravely to Santa Claus, Fairy Godmother took him by the hand and led him, still too astonished to speak, to a prominent place at the head of the hall.

"Dear Santa Claus," said Fairy Godmother, her sober face belied by the twinkle in her eye, "wake, and welcome us. We are giving you a Christmas party. Dremia, here, thought it was too bad you should always be doing nice things for others and never have anything done to make you happy. So we have stormed your castle, invited your guests, and here we all are, ready for the biggest frolic ever known."

Santa Claus, wide awake at last, burst into a hearty laugh.

"Dremia, hey! Oh, you rogue! I might have known you would be up to something of this sort. You laughed in your sleep as I put your gifts in your stocking last night. So this is what you were planning. But I'll be bound the Fairy Godmother had a big share in it too!"

"Dear Mr. Santa Claus!" said Dremia shyly, slipping her hand into his and looking up lovingly into his face, "I wanted so to do something for you. Everybody in the Children's World loves you so much, but we never thought before how we could let you know it.

"But see, Santa Claus!" pointing to

the huge stocking by the fireplace. It was filled with the funniest folk in all Toyland, who were holding themselves perfectly rigid for fear they would laugh and spoil their tableau. "See what you have in your stocking!"

Santa Claus turned about quickly and stared at the stocking and its contents. Soberly, for a whole minute, the folk from Toyland stared back at him, looking as unconscious as possible. Then Santa Claus, laughing again, reached out for Jumping Jack, who was hanging to the toe of the stocking, and pulling his string so that he danced a lively jig, said merrily:

"You little rascals! If I don't get even

with you for this my name is not Santa Claus."

Then with chuckles of glee the waggish little urchins from Toyland slipped out of the holes or jumped from the top of the stocking, scampering away to right and left, out of the reach of Santa Claus.

Meanwhile, the other guests, as they came, disappeared for a moment behind the big screen, each leaving a mysterious looking package. Back and forth, hustle, bustle, ran the little people of Santa Claus Land, lighting the candles and fixing the Christmas tree, for who knew so well as they how it should be done?

Soon the guests gathered about Santa Claus like bees around a gorgeous honey

flower. Santa Claus, entering into the spirit of fun, had a gay, bantering word for every one.

"Your worshipful Majesties," bowing low as Oberon and Titania advanced to greet him, "it is a far cry from Fairyland to Santa Claus Land. I am overwhelmed with the honor you have done me in coming to my house to-night. Only the Fairy Godmother could have brought you, I know. Most gladly do I greet you and your court.

"What, more crowned heads!" as the King of the Counting House and the Queen that ate bread and honey followed closely after Oberon and Titania. "Most welcome are you both! Did you bring

the Maid and the Blackbirds with you?"

"'Pon my soul, if here aren't good King Cole and his Fiddlers Three! Make yourself at home by my fireplace, your Majesty! You will find a pipe and bowl handy. Station the musicians on the stairway landing, where they can play for us. I presume the Cat with his fiddle is here somewhere in the crowd, and he will be happy to join them later.

"Cinderella, my dear girl! I did not know you could be out after twelve. The Fairy Godmother has relented since the Prince found you, hasn't she?

"The Frog Prince and the Haughty Princess! What a fine looking couple! Well, well! And who is that behind you?

Sleeping Beauty, as I live! Wide awake now, since the Right Prince kissed her, isn't she?

"Una and her Lion! Who would believe it? And Golden Hair and the Three Bears! Don't you sit through any of my chairs, little girl, or I'll growl worse than the bears did.

"Alice from Wonderland, with the March Hare and the Queen of Hearts! No heads off to-night, I pray you!

"Red Riding Hood in the care of the Woodchopper! That's good! Hansel and Gretel! Snow White and Rose Red—Children of the Forest! I'm glad to see you all.

"Jack Horner, we have a special corner

for you. And if there isn't a plum pie somewhere around, my nose misleads me.

"Boy Blue, give us a blast on your wonderful horn! Perhaps you would like to join the Fiddlers on the stairway.

"Mistress Mary, no contrary fits here! Not a pout nor a frown permitted.

"Oh, Jack and Mrs. Sprat! Puss in Boots! Little Miss Muffet! Peter Rabbit! How it gladdens my heart to see every one of you!

"Tom the Piper's Son, and Simple Simon! How d'ye do? Happy as ever, though not overburdened with wits? Well, never mind, my boys. Here are the Three Wise Men of Gotham, and their wisdom did little more for them

than your witlessness did for you.

"Welcome, welcome, dear friends! Make yourselves at home. You all know one another, I'm sure. Those who live in Children's World need no introductions. Fairy Godmother and Dremia have charge of everything to-night. I'm only a guest myself, they say."

After greeting Santa Claus, the guests turned to Fairy Godmother and Dremia. Fairy Godmother they knew well, but Dremia was a stranger to some of them. Very sweet she looked as she stood there, her eyes sparkling and her cheeks flushed with excitement. The party was all so much lovelier than even she had dreamed it would be.

She shyly added her welcome to those of Santa Claus and Fairy Godmother, and then forgot herself entirely as she watched the guests moving to and fro, talking together and forming such queer groups. Young and old, fat and thin, fairies and giants, kings and servants, princesses and thieves, bears and timid maidens, rabbits and pussy cats—all were laughing, joking, and having the merriest possible time.

It was not long before the little people of Santa Claus Land had finished their work, and, peeping from behind the screen, nodded to the Fairy Godmother. She nodded back, and turning to the musicians on the broad landing of the stair, gave them the signal to begin.

At once they struck up a rollicking Christmas tune. The big screen was drawn aside by invisible hands, and the most wonderful Christmas tree that ever was seen stood revealed in all its beauty. Will-o'-the-wisp lights gleamed on every twig. On the topmost branch swayed a lovely fairy, clad in snowy white, with glittering diamonds and emeralds in her hair and at her belt. Tiny elves and gnomes perched about among the branches, looking saucily out. Strings of bright red and waxen-white berries were looped from twig to twig. Knobby, queer-shaped packages hung thick on the tree, and were piled in heaps beneath it.

Santa Claus gazed at everything as

if fascinated, until the music died away.

"Well, well, well!" he said slowly. "I thought I had seen every possible kind of beautiful Christmas tree, but this far excels them all. Aren't you going to let me distribute the gifts, Fairy Godmother?"

"No," answered Fairy Godmother. "You are to sit here in your armchair while I act as mistress of ceremonies and take the gifts from the tree. Dremia may hand them to you."

"All right," said Santa Claus, as he sat down in his cushioned chair. "I will watch and see how you do it, and perhaps I shall be able to do it better myself next year."

"Now then, where shall we begin?"

questioned Fairy Godmother, glancing quickly from the tree to the pile of gifts beneath it, while the rest of the company crowded closely around to see each package as it was unwrapped.

"Begin with your own, please, Fairy Godmother!" begged Dremia. "It is the biggest, and so many of the other things go with it that it should come first."

"But it isn't here," objected Fairy Godmother.

"That doesn't make any difference. Let me tell him! Ah, do, dear Fairy Godmother!" pleaded Dremia. And seeing permission in Godmother's face, she turned to Santa Claus, saying:

"Outside in your stable, Mr. Santa

Claus, you will find a brand-new pumpkin-yellow sleigh—a fairy kind that will always be big enough, no matter how much you may want to carry in it. Fairy Godmother gives you that."

"Ho, ho!" laughed Santa Claus. "It takes a fairy godmother to know just what one wants, doesn't it? I was beginning to fear that my old sleigh would not last another year. Thanks from the bottom of my heart, kind Godmother!"

"And from Dremia, with my aid, comes a magic sack for your toy pack. It, too, will always be large enough for whatever you wish to put into it," said Fairy Godmother, beaming with pleasure because Santa Claus liked her gift so much.

"I know you, Dremia!" said Santa Claus, catching the little girl and giving her a loving squeeze. "You want me to bring you more toys next year than ever before. We'll see about that! We'll see about that."

"Here is another large gift," continued Fairy Godmother, picking up a bulky package from the pile under the tree and reading the tag. "A pair of fur-lined boots from Puss in Boots. And right beside it," lifting another, "is a fur cap made and presented by Robinson Crusoe and his man Friday. Next," before Santa could say anything, "two fur robes from the Teddy bears, and," pausing to read another tag, "a pair of mittens from the

Three Little Kittens, who will always help you find them."

"Good, good!" cried Santa Claus, piling his treasures around him. "I shall be as snug as a bug in a rug. These young ones evidently think the old man needs to be taken care of. I'll show them how lively I'll get around next year. Jack Frost and Old Boreas will not have a chance to play any tricks on me."

"Jack the Giant-Killer sends a bean-stalk ladder for you to use in the tall chimneys," continued Godmother.

"I'll surely use it!" replied Santa.

"Mistress Mary sends a string of silver bells for the reindeers."

"Won't they shake their heads to hear them ring!" chuckled Santa.

"Now here are some home comforts," said Fairy Godmother, briskly. "From Aladdin is a wonderful genii lamp to hang in Santa Claus Hall." And she handed it carefully to Santa Claus, who by this time was too overcome to speak.

"A pair of spun-glass house slippers from Cinderella, with the hope that they will not be too small. This new pipe is from King Cole. This big brown bowl comes from the Three Wise Men of Gotham. They do not wish to go to sea any more. This new armchair is from the Three Bears, for they think you will need a new one after Golden Hair has been here

to-night. It should stand on this gay square of carpet, sent by the Little Lame Prince.

"Now, what is this?" taking in her hand a soft, round, warm, wriggling bundle. A small black head popped out at one end, and a faint whine was heard. "A puppy! As I live, a puppy!—with the compliments of Mother Hubbard, who knows there can be no nicer gift."

A shout of laughter arose from the guests as the puppy rolled and tumbled over Santa Claus' feet.

As Fairy Godmother turned back to the tree, a pitiful "miaow" greeted her, and hastily taking down a bag that hung on a high branch she exclaimed:

"I declare, if this isn't a companion for the puppy! Big Jack Stout sends the pussy he pulled out of the well where little Johnny Green threw it."

Then everybody laughed again as hard as they could. Poor Pussy's eyes grew big with fright, but Santa Claus held it on his knee and smoothed its soft fur until it was quieted.

When the laughter had subsided, Fairy Godmother went on calling off the names rapidly:

"An excellent broom from the Old Woman Who Sweeps! A basket from little Red Riding Hood! A sleeping powder from the Sleeping Beauty, to use when you are tired after your next long trip!

A candy pig from Tom the Piper's Son, to make you think of his particular friend! Some fishhooks from Simple Simon, with a note saying it is useless for you to fish in his mother's pail, for he has tried it and is sure there are no fish there! A flute from the Pied Piper that will make the children love you more than ever, and a tin horn from Boy Blue so you need not chase up and down so much to gather your woolly baa-lambs! Oh, Santa Claus, what a good time you can have!"

"But what is this? What is this?" said Fairy Godmother as she stooped over a cradle-shaped bundle near the back of the tree, somewhat out of sight, and read the tag:

"From the Old Woman who lives in the shoe.
She has so many children she don't know what to do;
So the Littlest Baby she's sending to you,
With a Christmas message of love so true."

"Oh! Oh! Oh! Santa Claus!" cried the guests, doubling up with laughter. "Whatever will you do with the Littlest Baby?"

Santa Claus gathered it tenderly in his arms, and cuddled it up close to his long white beard. "The Littlest Baby? What will I do with it? Why, love it and care for it, to be sure! Don't you think I know how to care for a baby by this time?"

"Here's something else," interrupted Fairy Godmother, reading:

"From Peter Rabbit, a rabbit skin,
To wrap the Littlest Baby in."

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'Santa Claus gazed at everything as if fascinated"

"Nothing could be better," said Santa Claus promptly, taking it and wrapping it carefully around the Littlest Baby.

And so Fairy Godmother went on reading the tags and handing over the packages until Santa Claus was almost buried beneath the pile. Dremia thought she had never enjoyed a Christmas tree or her own gifts half so much as these given to Santa Claus.

Meanwhile the little people of Santa Claus Land had been busy in another part of the hall. When Santa Claus and the guests finally turned their attention from the dismantled tree, they found a long table spread for the Christmas feast, and groaning beneath its load of dainties as

all good Christmas tables do. Oh, such goodies! Fairy Godmother had ordered everything she could think of. She knew that with guests from every country under the sun there must be dishes to suit all tastes.

At the top of the table was a boar's head with an apple in its mouth; at the bottom an immense roast turkey; while scattered around were German Christmas cakes, dishes of macaroni, jellies, pickles, salads, vegetables, more than one could name or think of. It made one's mouth water to see them.

The merry company gathered around the table. Santa Claus was given the seat of honor at the head, with Dremia at his

right hand. Fairy Godmother sat at the foot, and the others took their places just as it happened; and as they all were so well acquainted, every one had a jolly chat with those sitting next him. Fairy Godmother served, and kept the little people of Santa Claus Land busy handing plates.

As they passed each dish, Fairy Godmother told which of the merry company had brought it to the Christmas feast. She thought they would enjoy the good things more if they knew where each had come from.

"For our first course we have mock turtle soup," said she. "Alice brought it from Wonderland, so you know it must be good.

"For the next course, little fishes caught by Tommy Tittlemouse and Daddy Catch-'em-with-a-Hook. Though they are small, they are certainly delicious.

"This splendid piece of beef was sent by Taffy the Welshman. I did not ask him where he got it, but I know he came by it honestly. Then this nice dish of fat and lean meat was given by Jack and Mrs. Sprat. You can take whichever you prefer, and then you will be as happy as they are.

"Tiny Tim could not come himself, but he has sent a Christmas goose, with a Christmas greeting to all. The duck in the same course came from the Little Man Who Had a Little Gun.

"This bread and cheese was sent by the Bachelor Who Lives by Himself, and it is sure to be fine, for he is very careful to keep it on the shelf away from the rats and the mice. If you prefer it, however, here is the famous bread and honey the Queen likes so much, or fresh muffins made by the Muffin Man of Drury Lane.

"Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers and sent half of them to our Christmas feast. Just try them! You will find them very spicy.

"Here are some beautiful eggs from the Big White Hare of Easter Isle, which he sent us for the party instead of keeping them to color for the children next Easter.

"Some of you may enjoy this delicious

porridge from Golden Hair. It is made after the recipe used for the Little Wee Bear's porridge which she liked so much.

"Miss Muffet brought this big bowl of curds and whey, and says that the spider did not come anywhere near her while she was preparing it.

"We have two of the choicest kinds of pudding—one from the Old Man with the Three Wishes, and the other from King Arthur. And King Arthur says it is all a mistake about his stealing three pecks of barley meal for the pudding. Why should he steal meal when he was a king and could have all he needed? We should have had a third pudding, but the cat ran away with the pudding-bag string,

so it could not be cooked in time. It is lucky for the cat that he didn't come to Santa Claus Hall to-night.

"Jack Horner says this is the best mince pie he has ever eaten, and he has pulled the plums out of enough pies to be a good judge. In it you will find plenty of plums, so each of you may stick in your thumb and pull out one. The pumpkin pie is from Peter Pumpkin, made from one of the pumpkins in Corner Lot, and is the sweetest, juiciest, creamiest, spiciest pie that cook could make.

"Look and listen!" said Godmother, calling the attention of all the guests to another mysterious pie before her. Carefully she cut the crust. "This is the

famous blackbird pie, sent by the King. Is not this a worthy dish to set before Santa Claus?"

As the crust fell apart, the four and twenty blackbirds set up a chirping and twittering sweeter than any Christmas carol you have ever heard.

"The Queen of Hearts has brought some fresh tarts which she made and hurried away before the Knave of Hearts could steal them. Have you ever eaten any that were better?

"Handy Spandy Jack-a-Dandy sends plum cake and sugar candy. Because he loves them so, he had a large supply on hand, and sent more than enough for us all.

"If you are thirsty, there is tea brewed by Polly-Put-the-Kettle-On, rich milk from the cow with the crumpled horn, sent by the Maiden All Forlorn, and sparkling spring water which Undine has brought.

"Now, help yourselves, all of you! There is surely enough variety so that every one can have what he likes best."

For a time the clatter of dishes and the din of happy voices was all that could be heard. But gradually, as their appetites were satisfied, the guests ate more slowly. As they lingered over the plum cake and sugar candy, Fairy Godmother stood in her place, rapped on the table with her wand to command attention,

and holding high a brimming goblet of sparkling water, proposed this toast:

"Here's to Santa Claus, best loved of all who live in the Children's World—the one whom all delight to honor; whose heart is ever warm; whose laugh is ever hearty; whose visits ever give happiness! Health and long life to Santa Claus!"

Rising from their seats with one accord, clinking their glasses together and crying, "Santa Claus! Long life to Santa Claus!" the guests drank the toast with heartiest good will and high spirits.

Santa Claus pulled out his handkerchief, blew his nose with a loud blast in order to conceal his feelings, and at last finding his voice, responded:

"Thanks, many thanks, good friends! You do me too much honor. For what would Santa Claus be without you all? How could I get along without a friendly fairy godmother to tell me what the children are longing for? How could I satisfy their wishes were it not for this goodly company who go so willingly to make the children happy? How could I ever fill my pack and make my rounds without the assistance of the energetic little people of Santa Claus Land? I cannot tell you how I rejoice to see you here to-night. Let us love one another and always work together, our only aim being to make the children happier and better."

"Hear, hear!" cried the guests, as Santa Claus sat down.

Before Fairy Godmother could speak again, up rose Cinderella's handsome Prince, crying gayly:

"Another toast give I! Here's to the dearest, daintiest, most bewitching little old lady ever known, second only to Santa Claus in the Children's World! To her who sympathizes in their longings, who finds a way to grant their wishes, who takes them long journeys to mysterious places, and introduces them to wonderful people unknown to the grown folks! Here's to her who gave me the loveliest bride that ever happy prince had!" glancing down at Cinderella blushing by

his side. "Drink, I say, to the health of the Fairy Godmother!"

Santa Claus jumped to his feet and led in the joyous clamor of voices that responded to the gay prince's toast. "Fairy Godmother! Here's to Fairy Godmother!" they cried again and again.

Fairy Godmother stood on her chair in order to be on a level with the tallest of them, and shook her wand threateningly at the happy, noisy crowd. But the pretended frown on her face fled before the twinkle in her eye.

"Oh, you wicked lads and lasses, you! How shall I pay you back for this? Shall I turn you all into toads and polliwogs? I know what I'll do! I'll grant you each

your first wish. So be careful! That will teach you not to draw attention to a wrinkled old woman like me!"

"Our first wish shall be granted!" called the prince. "Then let us all wish every possible joy to our dear Fairy Godmother herself!"

"Every possible joy to our dear Fairy Godmother herself!" echoed every voice. And they laughed in their glee at having outwitted the jolly little lady.

"One more toast!" called Santa Claus. "One more toast before our feast is ended! Here's to Dremia, here's to darling little Dremia, whose grateful heart and loving thought led to our coming together to-night; Dremia, who joys in Santa

Claus, delights in the fairies, revels in toys, loses herself with the charming folk who dwell in Make-believe Land! May she never lose her loving child's heart though she lives to be as old as the Fairy Godmother thinks herself to be!" bowing low to the beaming little old lady at the foot of the table. "Drink, all, to the health of darling Dremia!"

Seizing the little girl, he lifted her to his broad shoulder, and nodding to the musicians, who struck up a rollicking tune, up and down the long hall he went, the guests falling in behind, dancing, curtsying to each other, whirling around, making cheeses, and cutting up a hundred capers.

"A game of blindman's buff before we leave!" called some one, "and Santa Claus must be 'IT'."

"All right!" roared Santa Claus. "Dremia shall bind my eyes with her sash, and I will catch you all in a jiffy."

And then there was such a frolic as you cannot even imagine. The guests fled shrieking to corner and cubby, but all to no avail. Santa Claus made wild dashes this way and that. He caught Cinderella and Tom, the Piper's Son, with one hand. Jack Horner and Sleeping Beauty had sought the same corner, and he soon found them. He pounced on the Queen of Hearts just in time to save the Frog Prince's head, which she was

angrily ordering off because he had got in her way. He fumbled in the chimney corner and caught King Cole, accidentally knocking over his pipe and bowl and breaking them all to smash.

Boy Blue and Alice from Wonderland had hidden under the table, but he stooped and dragged them out by the hair. Peter Rabbit and little Red Riding Hood eluded him for a while, but finally he cornered them too. Fairy Godmother was cunningly hidden behind the Littlest Baby's cradle, while Dremia had hid under the sofa cushions. But it was no use. Santa Claus knew them all so well he could guess just where to seek them. They had to give up, and dropped panting

and breathless on chairs and couches and on the floor.

Just then the Littlest Baby, wakened by the merry-making, set up a frightened wail.

"There, there! Did we wake her?" soothed Santa Claus, cuddling her in his arms and rocking to and fro. "There, there! We'll not do it any more!

"But how are you going to get all these folks home, Fairy Godmother, I'd like to know!"

"Why, pack them in the pumpkin coach and the new Santa Claus sleigh, and away with them!" answered Fairy Godmother, briskly, stepping to the great outside door and signaling as she spoke.

Immediately the tinkling of the reindeer bells and the blowing of the coachman's horn could be heard.

"In with you all!" commanded Godmother, hurrying them to the door.

"Good night, dear Santa Claus!" they called as they obeyed her. "Never, no, never, have we had such a good time! Good night, Dremia! Can you not think of another frolic for us some time? Good night! Good night!"

Fairy Godmother and Dremia were the last to leave. "Good night, dear Mr. Santa Claus! May we come again next year?"

In a flash the impatient reindeer and the mouse-gray steeds vanished with

their loads, leaving Santa Claus standing in the doorway, the Littlest Baby in his arms, the puppy tumbling about his feet, the pussy cat curled up on the arm of his chair. He shut the door and came slowly back to the fireplace.

"A Christmas party for Santa Claus! Well, I never!" said he.

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